



File Code: 1950

Date: June 3, 2020

Dear Friends of the Mount Rogers NRA,

The USDA Forest Service, is seeking comments in regards to a watershed improvement proposal in the Glade Mountain area on the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area (NRA) in Smyth County, VA (see KillingerProjectLocationMap.pdf on the [project website](#)).

## Background

This project is within a manganese mining site in the Glade Mountain area. Active mining ceased in the early 1960s and restoration began in 1963. A constructed gabion channel carrying a perennial unnamed tributary of Killinger Creek has failed, allowing the stream to erode a new channel through deposited mine spoils consisting of very fine clay particles. This erosion is resulting in excessive sedimentation to Killinger Creek, a tributary of Cripple Creek in the New River drainage. A proposal to address these impacts has been developed in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy; Division of Mineral Mining (VA DMM). The DMM name for this proposal is the Glade Mountain Reclamation Project; the Forest Service is referring to it as the Killinger Creek Mine Restoration and Mitigation Project.

## Purpose and Need for the Project

The excessive sediment leaving the mine area is negatively impacting the downstream aquatic environment, private property, and commercial fishing operations along Cripple Creek. The purpose of this project is to stabilize the abandoned mine site infrastructure and reduce erosion and sedimentation in the Killinger Creek watershed. This will be done by repairing a gabion channel and pond inlet, stabilizing road access and an existing pond discharge channel, and revegetation on the site. This work is expected to prevent future erosion of the mine spoils and improve downstream aquatic habitat and water quality.

If this project is not implemented, proposed critical habitat for the Federally-listed candy darter in Cripple Creek will continue to be impacted by increased turbidity due to the sedimentation.

## Proposed Action

This project will have a number of components, as detailed in the *Technical scope for Glade Mountain Reclamation* document available on the project website:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=32359>



The project will include improving access along existing roads and on the project site, repair of the existing gabion channel, maintenance and upgrade of other existing water control structures, stabilization of the stream channel immediately above the lower sediment pond, and the installation of a turbidity curtain and flocculant mitigations in the lower pond during project implementation.

We anticipate this proposal to be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under two categories:

36 CFR 220.6(d)(4):

*Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries.*

and

36 CFR 220.6(e)(18):

*Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian areas or other water bodies by removing, replacing, or modifying water control structures such as, but not limited to, dams, levees, dikes, ditches, culverts, pipes, drainage tiles, valves, gates, and fencing, to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable where valid existing rights or special use authorizations are not unilaterally altered or canceled.*

The responsible official for the decision will be the Area Ranger for the Mount Rogers NRA.

## **Public Involvement**

As a result of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (Public Law No. 113-76) and the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill, Public Law No. 102-381), the Forest Service will no longer offer appeal opportunities for categorically excluded projects. However, we will continue to offer public involvement opportunities for these projects and will take public comments into consideration before final decisions are made. Therefore, we welcome your involvement and encourage your comments on this proposal. Comments received, including names and contact information of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

Written comments concerning this proposal will be accepted until Monday, July 6, 2020. Comments may be submitted through the Killinger Creek Mine Restoration and Mitigation Project website via the web form:

<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=32359>



This web form can also be accessed from the project website:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=32359>

On the right side, you can select "Comment/Object on Project."

Written comments can also be submitted hardcopy to:

USDA Forest Service  
ATTN: Barry Garten, Area Ranger  
3714 Highway 16  
Marion, VA 24354

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered objections are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic objections must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc, .docx).

Please share any specific concerns that you feel need to be considered within the context of this proposed action. Make your comments as concise as you can and address the proposed action specifically. State "Killinger Creek Mine Restoration and Mitigation" in the subject line when providing electronic objections, or on the envelope when replying by mail.

If you have questions about this proposal please contact Chris Brown at (540) 953-3570, or by email at [christopherjbrown@fs.fed.us](mailto:christopherjbrown@fs.fed.us). Thank you for your interest in the management of your National Forests.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Barry K. Garten*

BARRY K. GARTEN  
Area Ranger

